economic and people-to-people linkages, Government is of the opinion that an additional Consulate could expand India-US trade and economic relations. It will also lead to faster processing of requests for US visas and consular services and would offer increased opportunities to enter into mutually beneficial cooperation.

Safety of Haj pilgrims

1047. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is fact that a large number of Indians died during the Haj this year;

(b) if so, the exact number thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) the new steps proposed by Government for the safety of Haj pilgrims?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) A total of 290 Indians died during Haj 2006 as per following break-up:

(i)	Due to natural causes like cardiac arrest, respiratory failure, etc.	—	217
(ii)	Due to stampede	—	62
(iii)	In building collapse	—	3
(iv)	In road accidents	—	7
(v)	In lift accident	—	1

(c) the orientation/training of pilgrims is a regular feature of Haj arrangements. Haj Committee of India, in coordination with State Haj Committees and other voluntary organizations who are involved in the Haj arrangements, has been conducting orientation camps throughout the country for prospective Haj pilgrims, with special emphasis on the performance of Haj especially on safety measures and methods to deal with emergencies such as accidents and stampedes, etc. These are explained in detail by specially trained resource persons.

Expansion of 1974 Bilateral Protocol

1048. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to refer to the reply to Unstarred Question 1723 given in the Rajya Sabha

on the 8th December 2005 and state:

(a) whether Government of Pakistan have responded to the proposal of our Government to expand the 1974 bilateral protocol to increase the number of shrines and pilgrims in both the countries;

(b) if so, the names of the new shrines in both the countries added to the earlier list and other related details regarding the number of pilgrims from both the countries allowed to visit the shrines; and

(c) if not, the follow up action that is proposed to be taken in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) to (c) There has been no substantive response from Pakistan to the Indian proposal. The matters related to expansion of the bilateral 'Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines-1974' will be discussed during the forthcoming Secretary (Culture) level talks in the third round of Composite Dialogue under 'Promotion of Friendly Exchanges in Various Fields'.

Promotion policy for IFS officers

1049. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:
SHRI AMAR SINGH:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have decided to revise the promotion policy for the officers of the Indian Foreign Services;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when it is likely to be implemented?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ANAND SHARMA): (a) No decision has been taken by the Government to revise the promotion policy for the officers of the Indian Foreign Service.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Relationship with Nepal

1050. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA:
SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether our relationship with the Nepal have been steadily